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THE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND BIOECONOMY

SENATOR
GERALD VAN WOERKOM
CHAIRMAN

Minutes of the Senate Agriculture and Bio-economy Committee

Thursday, February 12th, 2009

9:00 a.m.

Room 110 Farnum Building

- Chairman Van Woerkom called the Committee to order at 9:02a.m.
- Members Present: Van Woerkom, Gilbert, Birkholz, Gleason and Whitmer
- Senator Gilbert moved to approve the minutes from January 29th. His motion was supported by Senator Gleason and was approved unanimously.
- Chairman Van Woerkom explained his bill, Senate Bill 134 that would return the loan portion of the Agriculture Innovation funds back into a grant. The change would free up \$5 million that is currently not being utilized
- Nancy Nyquist and Mike Dibernardo from the Department of Agriculture testified in support of the bill and provided an explanation as to why the grant program had not been successful. She also noted that previous rounds of grants leveraged 8 dollars in private funds for every state dollar.
- Rebecca Park from Michigan Farm Bureau turned in a card supporting Senate Bill 134 but did not wish to speak.
- Senator Gilbert moved to adopt the S-1 substitute for Senate Bill 134. His motion was supported by Senator Birkholz and was approved unanimously.
- Senator Gilbert moved to report out Senate Bill 134 with recommendation that it pass. His motion was supported by Senator Birkholz and was approved unanimously.
- Senator Gilbert move to give Senate Bill 134 immediate effect. His motion was supported by Senator Birkholz was approved unanimously.

- Jamie Zmito Somers from the Department of Agriculture gave a presentation on the agricultural export programs within the department and the impact of exports on the agriculture industry. They currently operate their program on only \$50,000 and she suggested that they would be even more effective in leveraging federal dollars if they had more funding.
- Ken Rauscher from the Department of Agriculture testified on the status of fruit and vegetable inspections. He noted that they had increased the inspection fee and had worked with stakeholders to determine the amount. He testified that the fee increase was to make up for lost general fund revenue in the program.
- With no more business before the committee Senator Gleason motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.